

SCDDSN Quality Management

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The definition of “risk management” has evolved over time and depending upon the context. Traditionally, risk management has been associated with the health and safety of employees and the safe use of equipment and buildings. It focused on worker’s compensation claims, insurance coverage, and safety training. These are still necessary but not sufficient portions of a comprehensive risk management program.

Within the context of the long term disability field, the definition of risk management has rightly focused on the consumer of services, not on employees, buildings and equipment. What risks are the consumers liable to encounter, either as a result of the services provided to them (i.e. iatrogenic risks) or as a result of actions the provider should have taken, but did not. Within this context, emphasis is given to such areas as medication errors, abuse allegations, critical incidents, elopements, restraints, preventable deaths, etc.

The most recent focus and re-definition of risk management in the long term disabilities field is the result of the emphasis on consumer choice, freedom and self-determination. As an agency transforms itself from a service “provider” to a “supporter” of individuals, what is the proper role and responsibility of the agency in protecting the individual from the results of his/ her own poor decisions? When the consumer wants to live in their own apartment in the city without supervision, and they subsequently are hurt, where does the culpability lie?

DDSN acknowledges that it has the responsibility to monitor and, where possible, reduce the risks to consumers and employees in all three of these sub-areas of risk management (i.e. traditional risk management, consumer-oriented risk management, and consumer-determined risk management). Indeed, any comprehensive risk management program that involves individuals with long term disabilities and other special needs must cover all three areas mentioned above.
